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SUBJECT: INPUT FOR S TESTIMONY ON COLOMBIAN DEMOBILIZATION
LAW

MADAME SECRETARY: We understand that you will be testifying before Congress on the budget on February 16. Knowing Congressional interest in the paramilitary demobilizations in Colombia, and following Marc Grossman's visit to Colombia on February 14, we offer the following Q&As. The Colombian Congress will begin deliberations on the law in a special session beginning February 15.

Question 1

What is your assessment of progress on the Colombian demobilization law?

Answer 1

We recently received a letter from a number of Senators on the Colombian demobilization law. I want to assure them and you that we take this issue very seriously. Our embassy has had extensive discussions about it. Under Secretary Grossman was in Colombia on February 14 and raised the demobilization law with President Uribe, as well as with Senator Pardo, who has led a group drafting an alternative to the government bill.

Grossman made clear that the drafting and approval of the law was a matter for Colombians. But, as a friend of Colombia, he also stressed the importance the U.S. places on a strong law that provides for peace with justice and that effectively serves to dismantle the paramilitaries, and the ELN and FARC if they ever declare a cease-fire and begin a peace process.

President Uribe reaffirmed his commitment to achieve a law that meets these criteria before the end of June. Senator Pardo said that the government had already accepted 80 percent of his group's suggestions and that, although a few issues remained to be solved, he looked forward to the formal debate in the Colombian Congress that would begin on February 15. Grossman stressed the advantages of a joint Government-Pardo group text and urged that the remaining differences be resolved.

Question 2

What do you mean by a law that reflects the need for peace with justice?

Answer 2

We have made clear our hope that the law will provide for: (1) disclosure of past criminal or terrorist activities, a key step toward national reconciliation; (2) punishment for all those responsible for serious crimes; (3) dismantlement of these narco-terrorist organizations through seizure of property, and individual and collective reparations; (4) transparency; and (5) government monitoring and control to ensure that those demobilized do not return to crime. We also have emphasized that the law should contain nothing that could prejudice Colombia's excellent cooperation on extraditions.

WOOD